

# Middle Meramec

## Conservation Opportunity Area



Ozark  
Highlands



*The Middle Meramec landscape is embedded in one of the Midwest's largest expanses of timber.*

Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

The Middle Meramec Conservation Opportunity Area includes land within a roughly seven mile perimeter of the middle reaches of the Meramec River and its major tributaries. The topography is hilly, rugged and largely forested, with embedded glades, fens, caves, springs and other interesting natural features.

The Middle Meramec landscape supports a variety of plants and animals, from the aquatic spectaclecase mussel to the cave-dwelling grotto salamander. Sixty-five species and natural communities of conservation concern are recorded from this area, including the federally endangered Indiana bat, gray bat and Hine's emerald dragonfly. Cerulean warblers and other high-

priority interior forest birds are relatively abundant.

Prior to Euro-American settlement, the Middle Meramec was blanketed with oak and oak-pine forests and woodlands, with bottomland forests occurring along rivers and streams. Today, decades of fire suppression have eliminated the woodland ground flora. Much of the forest is now relatively even-aged second growth as a result of wide-spread logging in the early 1900s. Bottomland forests have been fragmented by pastures and development. The Meramec River's health is threatened by invasive species, some gravel mining practices and a reduction of wooded corridors along the river. Outdoor recreation and tourism play vital roles in local economies along the Meramec.

## Middle Meramec Conservation Strategies

- Conserve the forested landscape, aquatic resources, numerous natural communities and species of conservation concern.
- Create a Middle Meramec partnership.
- Continue working to eradicate invasive species.
- Maintain and increase forested habitat for high-priority bird species.
- Conserve glades, fens and other natural communities.
- Protect and restore existing mussel and native fish populations.
- Improve water quality.



Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

*Fens are created when groundwater seeps onto watertight rock layers, creating permanent, shallow wetlands.*

### Priority Research and Inventory Needs

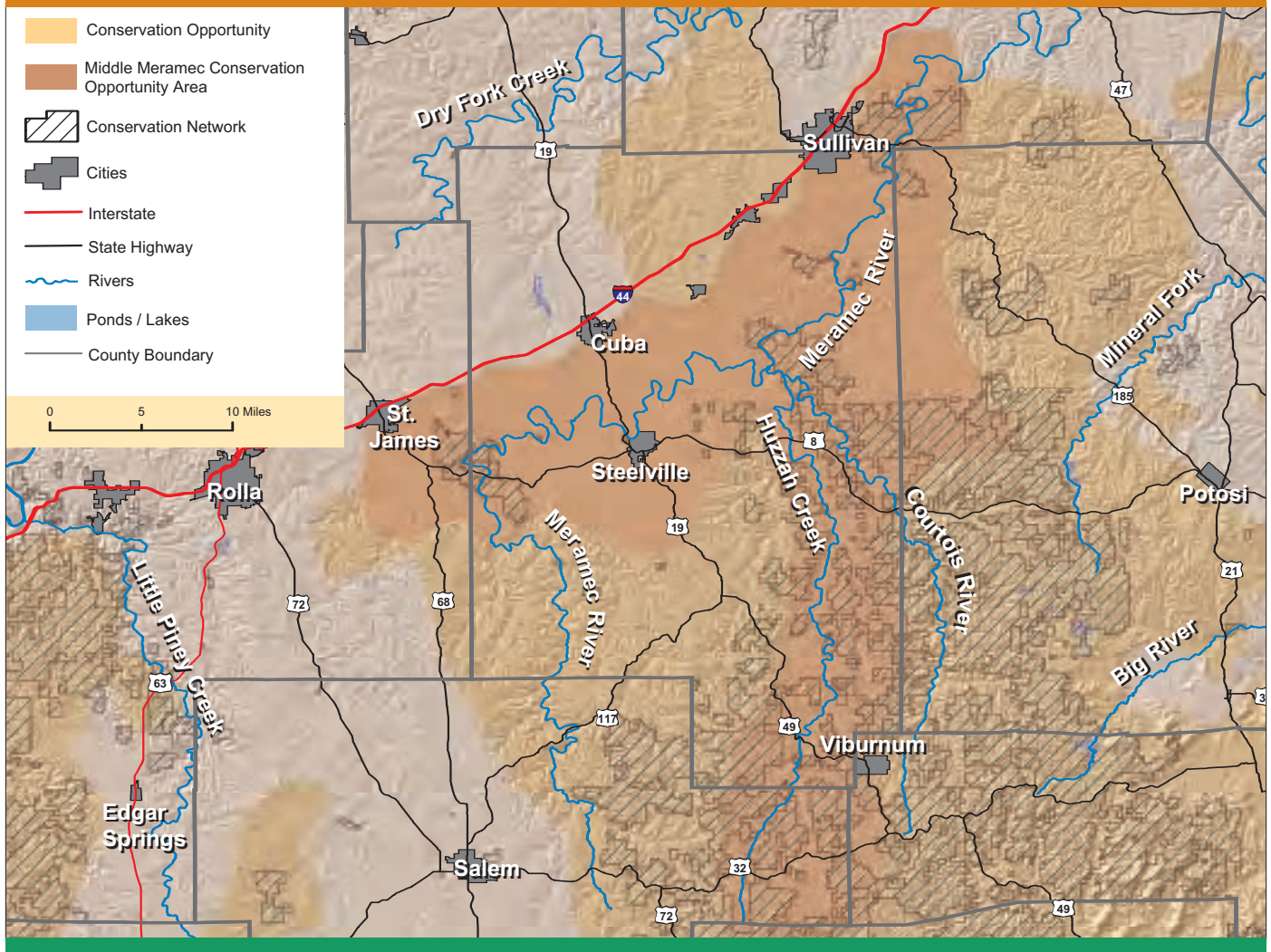
- Consolidate existing data from multiple partners.
- Identify and inventory spring, cave and karst features and species.
- Identify and inventory all glade, woodland and fen communities.
- Inventory aquatic and terrestrial high priority species.
- Assess the effects of forest management practices on bat habitat.
- Inventory recharge zones and sources of point-source pollution that negatively affect aquatic resources.
- Determine effects of increased boat traffic on aquatic systems of the Meramec River.
- Research the habitat-associations of cerulean warblers and other high priority bird species.

### Conservation Partners

**Existing:** The Nature Conservancy – Missouri Chapter (TNC); Ozark Regional Land Trust; National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF); U.S. Forest Service (USFS); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

**Potential:** American Fisheries Society; Audubon Missouri; Central Hardwoods Joint Venture; Greenway Network, Inc.; The James Foundation; Northern Ozark Rivers Partnership; Open Space Council; Sierra Club – Ozark Chapter; St. Louis University's Reis Biological Station; Washington University's Tyson Research Center; Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); National Park Service (NPS)

## Middle Meramec Conservation Opportunity Area



### Funding Sources

**Existing:** DNR annual budget; USFS annual budget; TNC annual budget; MDC annual budget; MDC State Wildlife Grants; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; USFWS North America Wetlands Conservation Act grant; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant; NWTF Wild Turkey Super Fund; Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative grant

**Promising Future Sources:** MDC Wildlife Diversity Fund

### Existing Conservation Network

Mark Twain National Forest–Salem/Potosi District; Meramec State Park (Meramec Upland Forest Natural Area); Onondaga State Park; Dillard Mill State Historic Site; Blue Springs Creek Conservation Area; Meramec Conservation Area; Huzzah Conservation Area; Onyx Cave Conservation Area; Woodson K. Woods Conservation Area (Springs End Forest Natural Area); Vilander Bluff Natural Area; Zahorsky Woods Preserve; Reis Biological Station; Riverview Access; Campbell Bridge Access; Sappington Bridge Access; Scott's Ford Access; Sand Ford Access; Leasburg Towersite; Rosati Towersite

Jim Rathert, Missouri  
Department of  
Conservation

*The prothonotary warbler relies on wooded stream valleys, like those in the Middle Meramec COA, for its livelihood.*

## River of Life



*Water quality in the Meramec River remains quite good. Over 100 kinds of fish can be found throughout its length. Trees along riverbanks help prevent erosion of soil and other pollutants from entering the river. In some locations this riparian corridor has been removed, resulting in increased sediments and poorer water quality.*

Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

### Conservation Challenges

The Middle Meramec Conservation Opportunity Area contains a diversity of habitat types. Future obstacles to conservation success may include lack of enforcement of river easements, increasing

development and recreation pressures, limited funding and staffing and a lack of public awareness of conservation efforts.

To learn more about the Middle Meramec Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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